

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

Finding of No Significant Impact
DOI-BLM-AZ-G020-2011-0017-EA

COTTONWOOD CANYON ROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY

Pinal County, Arizona

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BLM



Introduction

I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment (EA) (DOI-BLM-AZ-G020-2011-0017-EA) for the *Cottonwood Canyon Road Right-of-Way* project, dated October 2015, and considered the project design elements (pages 7 to 9, Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 of the EA), mitigation measures, and stipulations (pages 80 to 87, Section 5 of the EA).

I have also considered the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA:

Context

The Proposed Action is located approximately 10 miles northeast of Florence in Pinal County, Arizona. The Proposed Action is for the BLM to grant a Right-of-Way (ROW) for legal access over 1 mile of BLM land on Cottonwood Canyon Road. The BLM ROW would facilitate the improvement of approximately 6 miles of road from State Route 79 east to Sandman Road to accommodate heavy truck traffic. The ROW and road improvements would allow the ROW holder to build a landfill located on private property. These roadways currently provide access to BLM-administered public lands, State Trust lands, and private lands for multiple use activities, including mining, ranching, and recreation. The Proposed Action is in conformance with the 1989 Phoenix Resource Management Plan (RMP) and the Middle Gila Canyons Transportation Management Plan (TMP). It is also consistent with the Comprehensive Plan for Pinal County.

Intensity

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse:

The beneficial effects of the Proposed Action consist of positive impacts to the local residents of Pinal County. Currently existing landfills are near capacity and the Proposed Action would allow for the development of a new landfill that would let all Pinal County waste be disposed in Pinal County.

Impacts to air quality, cultural resources, the floodplain, native American religious concerns, threatened and endangered species, waste and hazardous materials, water quality, invasive and non-native weeds, rangeland health, migratory birds, recreation, wildlife, land use, travel and access, visual resources, mineral resources, vegetation, grazing, and socioeconomics are described in the EA. Adverse impacts would be mitigated by the measures described throughout the resource sections and summarized in Chapter 5 of the EA.

2. The degree to which the Proposed Action affects public health or safety:

Impacts to air quality from fugitive dust and air pollutants from the landfill would be mitigated through dust suppression measures per the appropriate Pinal County Air Quality Permit (EA section 3.1). Impacts to water quality from the implementation of the landfill would be mitigated through adhering to the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (EA section 3.7). Impacts from solid or hazardous waste generated or used at the

landfill site would be mitigated through adhering to the Municipal Solid Waste Landfill (MSWLF) federal regulations including the Resource Conservation Recovery Act (RCRA) (EA section 3.6).

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historical or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas:

There are no park lands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, known wetland/riparian areas, or ecologically critical areas in the project area. As described in the EA in section 3.2, impacts to cultural resources in the project area will be mitigated through data recovery.

4. The degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial:

Chapter 7 of the EA describes the entities that were consulted during the preparation of this EA. The BLM has worked with recreation groups and OHV users who were concerned about the loss of parking along Cottonwood Canyon Road. A new parking area will be constructed on BLM land east of Sandman Road.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks:

The effects of improving a road as well as constructing and operating a landfill are well known. No highly uncertain or unknown risks to the human environment were identified during the analysis of the Proposed Action.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration:

The Proposed Action neither establishes a precedent for future BLM actions with significant effects nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration. Additional NEPA analysis particular to this area would be on an individual, site-specific basis.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant impacts:

Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions that would affect the resources analyzed in the EA include ranching, mineral exploration, mining, recreation, artillery training, future residential development, the Ray Land Exchange, and development of the Ripsey Wash Tailings Storage Facility as described on pages 13 to 15 of the EA.

Resource-specific cumulative impacts from the Proposed Action are described in Chapter 3 of the EA as part of the analysis for impacts to each resource area. The project design elements, mitigation measures, and stipulations described in the EA would further reduce cumulative impacts.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources:

The Proposed Action would adversely affect nine cultural resource sites along Cottonwood Canyon Road and in the private landfill site. Six of the identified sites have been recommended eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The other three sites are of unknown eligibility and will require eligibility testing. In addition, there is one site that is recommended eligible for the NRHP but is located outside of the Area of Potential Effect (APE) but is sufficiently close to the project area that it may be impacted.

Impacts to cultural resource sites will be mitigated through implementation of a Historic Property Treatment Plan which will include the activities described in section 3.2.2 and 3.2.5 of the EA. In addition, stipulations described in 3.2.5 of the EA will be followed to further minimize direct impacts to cultural resources.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973:

There would be no significant impacts to federally-listed threatened and endangered species because no such species are found in the project area (pages 29 to 33, section 3.5.1 and 3.5.2 of the EA).

Impacts as a result of the Proposed Action would be similar for all wildlife in the project area and would generally consist of habitat removal, disturbance from increased noise and vibration, and individual injury or mortality from increased traffic leading to collisions with vehicles. Impacts to wildlife would be minimized by implementation of the mitigation measures described on pages 36 to 37 of the EA.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, local or tribal law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment:

The action is consistent with federal, state, local, and tribal laws and other requirements for the protection of the environment (pages 2 to 4, section 1.4 of the EA).

Finding of No Significant Impact

I have determined that, with the incorporation of the project design elements, mitigation measures, and stipulations that the Proposed Action would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

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Date